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TAKEN FOR THIEVES.

The Misadventures of Two Unlucky Relic Hunters.

Most boys have a fondness for collecting something or other—old coins, minerals, shells, plants, Indian relics and diverse other articles of more or less importance. While these pursuits are for the most part commendable and show a cultivated taste, even the best of them may be diverted into a wrongful channel.

A good example of this fact—and a warning to enthusiastic collectors—will be found in the unpleasant experience which befell Andy Sutton and myself a few years ago.

Eighteen miles up the Susquehanna river, on the bank of which we lived, lay Eagle island, so called from a pair of eagles which had long had their nest in a bunch of lofty pine trees on the upper point.

The island was of considerable extent, and near the center were half a dozen Indian graves.

As far back as I can remember Andy and I had longed to open one of these, and resurrect the treasures which we knew it must contain.

For a long time we regarded this as a hopeless ambition. Close to the Indian mounds stood an old stone house formerly occupied by Squire McMasters, the owner of the island.

Though the squire had moved to the mainland many years since he still kept a sharp watch on his property. This he could easily do, since his present home was on the bank of the river directly opposite the island.

Andy and I were not the only ones who had designs on the Indian graves. Several attempts were made to open them by unknown parties, and this resulted in a closer watch than ever being kept on the island.

Squire McMasters was a genial, kind-hearted man, but he had very rigid notions of propriety, and would have regarded the opening of one of the Indian graves as an act of sacrilege.

The desecration of the neighboring village graveyard could hardly have seemed worse in his eyes.

He would have laughed to scorn the suggestion that digging up these relics of the dead could in any way benefit the living.

So for year after year he kept constant vigil over the island, and the mounds of the redmen remained undisturbed.

Frequent brooding over the matter only served to strengthen the hope that Andy and I had so long cherished. The temptation waxed stronger and finally banished our scruples. We decided to visit Eagle island and open one of the mounds.

In view of Squire McMaster's watchfulness we took extra precautions to outwit him.

We started from home at daybreak on a bright, clear June morning, bound ostensibly on a fishing expedition. Our rods, landing net and bait pail were openly exposed in the boat, but under the stern seat, partially covered by our lunch baskets, lay a spade, a pick, and a small bull's-eye lantern with a movable slide.

A five-mile pull up the river brought us to Rockville. Here we carried our boat into the canal, and made such speed through the sluggish water that it was only one o'clock when we entered the river again at Clark's ferry dam.

Eagle island was three miles distant, and an hour later we sighted it. We did not venture near, but crossed to the left-hand shore of the river—Squire McMasters lived on the opposite side—and began to fish very unconcernedly in the deep holes at the foot of the mountain.

The water was in prime condition, and the bass bit so freely that we soon forgot the original object of the expedition.

Looking diagonally up and across the river, we could see Squire McMasters' big white house, and fearing lest his telescope was trained upon us from some unseen point, we thought it wise to disarm suspicion by pulling down the river a little way.

We landed about twenty yards from the upper end of the island and crept up through the trees, Andy with the lantern and spade, I with a pick. Every little sound caused us to start and tremble—a sure sign of a guilty conscience.

Emerging from the fringe of trees we found ourselves in an open field. We skirted the edge of this until we came to the deserted stone house and barn.

The former was in bad repair—not even fit for a tenant to occupy. We circled timidly around it and gained the orchard.

Here were the Indian mounds, scattered among the gnarled old apple trees. There was just enough light to reveal their location.

"Let's try this big one," whispered Andy, designating a circular hillock that lay within a dozen yards of the house. "It ought to have more in it than the others."

When we had excavated a hole about three feet square and a foot and a half in depth, Andy stopped operations to light the lantern.

"It won't do to work in the dark any longer," he said. "We might dig up arrowheads and things of that sort without seeing them."

The lantern was placed in such a position as to illuminate only the bottom of the hole, and we eagerly resumed digging. Deeper and deeper grew the excavation, and higher and higher mounted the heap of earth behind us. The pangs of conscience no longer annoyed us. We thought only of the treasures that lay under our feet, that were coming nearer to us with every stroke of pick and spade.

Once a slight creaking noise was heard in the direction of the house, and we stopped work, trembling with fright.

"It's only the wind swinging one of those old shutters," said Andy, scornfully. "What a pair of cowards we are!"

The sound was not repeated, and we were soon digging more eagerly than before.

"Ah! at last!" whispered Andy, excitedly.

He dropped the spade and seized with both hands a dull, white object that had just been thrown to the surface.

"What is it?" I asked.

"A piece of bone," he replied. "If we dig carefully we may find all the rest. An Indian skeleton, complete, would be a rich prize. Come, now, get to work. Under the bones we'll find other things—beads and tomahawks, and all the articles that used to be buried with the Indians."

It needed no stimulus from Andy to urge me on, and pick and spade were soon making the dirt fly in concert.

We turned up bones in abundance, large and small, and, strange to say, they were in an admirable state of preservation. We did not take time to examine them, but tossed them together in a pile that grew constantly larger.

Finally we struck a vein of a different kind, and a deep stroke of my pick brought up some curious fragments of earthenware, and the lower half of a bowl in good condition.

Neither Andy nor I had seen Indian pottery of this kind before. It was brown in color and smoothly glazed, nor did it have the usual criss-cross lines and queer ornamentations.

"That's a rare find," assured Andy. "Don't lose any of the pieces. Perhaps they all fit together."

I laid them carefully aside and went on digging. During the next five minutes nothing rewarded our search but a few more fragments of pottery, and finally we dropped our implements with one accord and wiped the drops of perspiration from our faces.

"This is hot work," said Andy. "Suppose we stop for awhile now, and begin again when we are rested. Let's take the bones and the crockery down to the boat, and bring the lunch-baskets up here. I'm hungry as a bear, and must have something to eat before I resume digging. We may have to go pretty deep, too, before we strike the more valuable things."

Andy's suggestion was a good one, and we speedily carried it out. The heap of bones and pottery was safely deposited in the front locker of the boat, and we returned to the orchard with the lunch-baskets. When we had devoured what little supply of food there was, Andy proposed taking a peep at the house.

I reluctantly consented, and we cautiously approached the rear door, passing under a rickety grape arbor.

Andy mounted the one step and suddenly drew back the lantern-slide, shedding a flood of light on the cracked, paintless old door.

"Hold on!" I whispered, catching hold of his shoulder. "I'm sure I heard something move inside just now."

"Nonsense!" replied Andy. "Only imagination."

He boldly threw open the door and entered, and I followed timidly at his heels.

Hardly had we crossed the threshold when the lantern was dashed from Andy's grasp by an invisible hand, and then Andy himself was thrown with stunning force to the floor.

A blow over the head sent me reeling on top of him, and, as I lay there stupid with fright, I heard a hoarse exclamation and scurrying footsteps, followed by the loud banging of the door. Then all was still.

Fortunately our unknown assailants had given the door such a jerk that it flew open on the recoil, and when we staggered to our feet, a little stunned and dizzy, we caught sight of the dusky gray streak.

We nearly fell over each other in our haste to get outside. We were under the impression that more enemies were concealed in the dark room.

Just as we put foot upon the brick walk that led under the grape arbor a light flashed through the trees a short distance away, and a loud voice called:

"Here they are! Come this way!"

Then we heard men calling in eager tones, and the hurrying tread of feet tramping down stubble and dry bushes.

We stood stock still for a moment, too frightened to move. The men came rapidly nearer, and the lanterns they were carrying threw glimmers of light almost to our feet.

"Into the house, quick!" whispered Andy, huskily. "It's too late to reach the boat."

We turned and darted through the open door. Andy closed it noiselessly, and pulled me across the floor. He struck a match so that we could find the way into another part of the house, and, just as the little blaze flared up, there came a rush of footsteps and a tremendous crash.

The door flew open and in rushed a dozen men, every one armed in some way. They dragged us roughly out from the corner where we had taken refuge, and for a moment or two I thought our lives were in danger.

One young fellow, wearing a flannel shirt and corduroy trousers, made repeated attempts to strike us with a heavy club.

"Let me get at them," he cried—"let me get at them!"

The others had to drag him away by main force and disarm him.

We were quite at a loss to know what this demonstration meant, for Squire McMasters was nowhere visible. But we were soon undeceived.

One of the men picked up a battered tin box from the floor, and shook it triumphantly before our eyes.

"Where's the money, you young scoundrels?" he demanded, fiercely. "Hand it over quick, and don't try to deny the crime! We've been on your track all this afternoon, and if we hadn't seen your light we'd 'a gone right past the island."

Before Andy or I could reply to this tirade another man entered the house in a state of great excitement.

"They've been digging down here in the orchard," he cried. "I found a pick and a shovel, but there's no sign of the money."

"Then where is it?" retorted the first speaker. "Here's the tin box—empty."

By this time the situation had begun to dawn upon both of us.

"Look here, you men are making a big mistake," said Andy, quickly, "and while you are losing time here, the real culprits are getting away as fast as they can. We don't know anything about that box, but we'll confess to digging open that Indian grave. We stopped work a little while ago, and came over to the house for a rest. We were hardly inside the door when we were both knocked down, and the men who did it are the parties you're looking for. They must have been hidden in here."

Andy's words made a doubtful impression. The men were not yet convinced.

"Believe me or not," he added, earnestly; "but you'll be sorry for it soon enough. The thieves are pulling down the river by this time, and, if there was any money in that tin box, they have it with them."

Andy's manner, rather than his words, turned the scale in our favor.

"Maybe these young chaps are not the ones, after all," muttered two or three of the men.

"The money isn't about them, anyhow," added another.

"Well, we'll settle that question soon enough," replied the leader, sternly. "If their boat's on the island that'll prove them guilty. We'll find a way then to make them disgorge the cash."

This sentiment met with general approval, and the whole party trooped down to the river bank, taking Andy and me with them.

Our own boat was gone, but there was another in its place—or, rather, a few yards above where ours had been. It was no doubt there when we landed, but we had failed to see it. It was a rickety old concern, empty save for a pair of paddles.

This discovery was regarded as a sure sign of our guilt. A great hubbub arose, and we were roughly handled for a moment or two.

But, fortunately, our own boat had left a deep imprint in the sand, and when we succeeded in pointing this out to our captors they accepted it as evidence of the truth of our story—namely, that the robbers had abandoned their own boat and taken ours instead.

"You fellows may be lying, and you may not," said the leader, "but if you've got nothing to do with this burglary I reckon Squire McMasters will want to see you about that Indian grave, so we'll send you right over to him."

The men held a hasty conference, and then hurried us across the island. Their own boats were on that side—two big bateaus. Half of the party immediately embarked in one of them and pulled with long strokes down the river—no doubt in pursuit of the thieves. The others crowded into the remaining boat, taking us with them, and headed for the opposite shore.

By this time there seemed to be a general belief in our innocence, and one of our captors obligingly told us that the men whom they were pursuing had robbed a farmhouse ten miles up the river that afternoon, and injured the farmer.

The pugnacious young man, who had tried to club us, was the latter's son. The burglars had taken to the river in a stolen boat, and the pursuing party had followed steadily on their track, until a gleam of light from our lantern caused them to land on the island.

Andy and I took little interest in the story of the burglary. We were worried over the lost boat, and over the fate that Squire McMasters would probably mete out to us.

Of course the squire was in bed when we landed, but he came down in dressing-gown and slippers, and received the whole party in the hall.

The confusing tale was soon told, and the squire eyed us malevolently.

"Sacrilegious young rascals!" he muttered. "I'll teach them a lesson."

Then we were led away to an outbuilding and securely locked up. Escape was out of the question, so we made the best of the situation and slept brokenly until morning.

About eight o'clock the squire himself liberated us and led us down the bank to the river.

Half a dozen of the men who had captured us on the previous night were standing around. Both bateaus lay in the water, and between them we spied, to our great delight, our own boat.

"The two burglars were captured down on the dam," said the squire, in a peculiar voice, "so you boys are exonerated from that charge. There is your boat again, safe and sound."

He led us down to it, and lifted the lid of the locker, revealing the heap of bones and broken pottery.

"I suppose this is the result of your desecration," he said, sternly. "Which mound did you get into? The one nearest the house?"

"Yes—yes, sir," we stammered, together.

The squire's eyes twinkled and the corners of his mouth twitched.

"I thought so," he said. "Those are the bones of my old white horse, Moses. I buried him there fifteen years ago, the week I moved from the island. That other valuable Indian pottery is some broken crockery my wife threw into the hole. There's a bushel or more of it back in my wood yard you may have, and I'll pay you to boot for taking it away." The squire paused a moment, evidently to enjoy the situation. "I won't prosecute you this time," he resumed, "but if I ever catch you on that island again you'll not get off so easily. You can go now!"

Andy and I took quick advantage of this permission, and as we pulled swiftly down the river we heard the squire and his companions laughing uproariously.

We sunk the bones and the crockery in the deepest part of Clark's Ferry dam, and arrived home in the middle of the afternoon. Somehow or other the joke got out, and it was a long time before we heard the last of it.

The experience taught us a lesson, however, and from that time on we had considerably more respect for the property of others. We never paid another visit to Eagle island.—Ralph Hamilton, in Golden Days.

A BIT OF HISTORY.

The Famous Armory Square Hospital at Washington.

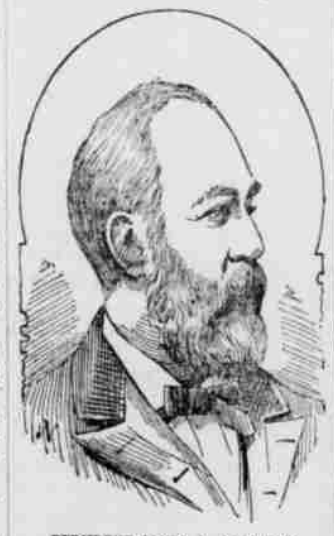
Built by a Militia Regiment, the Building Became a Refuge for Wounded Union Soldiers—Dr. D. W. Bliss and His Surgical Skill.

[Special Washington Letter.]

The history and work of the United States fish commission interested me last week, and probably interested my readers; but, there is a history back of it which we did not anticipate nor imagine as we walked together through the building and viewed the big fishes, little fishes, cannibal eel and other curiosities. The location, the edifice itself, has a history.

In the summer of 1857 the militia companies of Washington buried their rivalries and concentrated their common sense long enough to combine, for the general good, and build for themselves an armory in which each company should have an equal share of room and general accommodations. They had strawberry festivals, ice cream parties, balls, and all that sort o' thing so familiar to everybody in small cities. We must remember that in those days the national capital was a very small affair, as compared with the thing of beauty it is to-day. Although he said it in derision, Charles Dickens wrote the truth when he described Washington as city of "magnificent distances." Well, the good young people of that ante-bellum time raised enough money to build an armory, but they found real estate as unreasonably high as it is to-day, in a comparative sense. So, as a matter of necessity, they purchased a piece of ground out in the suburbs. Soldiers, you know, can afford to march a few blocks without complaining of weariness; and the young fellows of 1857 said, and meant it, that they preferred a place in the suburbs to a site in the city. The site for the armory was three blocks from the old National hotel, on Pennsylvania avenue; a hostelry which was at that time patronized by Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Thomas H. Benton and other great men of the senate, house of representatives and in the executive departments. Henry Clay died there only a short time before. Within twenty rods of the famous hotel there was a canal which was regarded as a natural boundary between north and south Washington, and all of south Washington, lying between the canal and the Potamac river, was called The Island. Indeed, it is so-called to-day by the oldest inhabitants, although the canal has long been a thing of the past. It was filled with our common soil, and well paved streets cover its former luggish bed.

The entire block of ground on which the militia lads then erected their armory was called, and is to this day called, Armory square. Scarcely had the building been completed when there came upon this country the horrors of a long and cruel internecine war. The young soldiers who drilled there were the first defenders of the national capital. Many of them went out to Bull Run in July, 1861, and there entered upon the sleep that knows no wakening—the soldier's sleep. They fell in defense of their country. Thousands of good men and true were taken sick, many were wounded nigh unto death, and the surgeons and nurses supplemented with skill and tenderness the awful carnage. Churches, schoolhouses, the capitol building and a portion of the patent office were converted into general hospitals. As the war continued, all of the sufferers of the union armies were brought to Washington, and the armory, which had been erected by the militiamen, became one of the most prominent of the harbors of refuge for the victims of that terrible strife. It was called Armory Square general hospital. I have seen the records which were kept at that time, and over thirty thousand sick and wounded soldiers were



PRESIDENT JAMES A. GARFIELD.

cared for, nursed into convalescence, to health and restored to duty, while many other thousands there died far from their loved ones at home. The records show soldiers from Maine and all of the New England states, Pennsylvania and all of the middle states, Ohio and all of the western states. Not only the armory building, in which the fish commission is now located; but all of the block of ground known as Armory square was occupied by this hospital. At first the ground was covered with tents; then, as the war continued and grew in ferocity and consequent carnage, permanent barracks were erected, so that the sufferers might be less affected by the weather of this peculiarly changeable clime. There were cries of pain, screams of agony, moans of anguish as the poor fellows laid there shot and torn by the bullets, mangled by the shells, enduring, in addition to their physical sufferings, the indescribable torments of homesickness. All these realistic scenes were enacted within the walls and upon the parade grounds of the armory which had been erected for the "play soldiers," as we commonly denominate our militiamen in time of peace.

The ablest surgeon ever in charge of Armory Square general hospital, and for a long time its director, was Dr. D. W. Bliss. The history of the lives saved by his skill would fill a book, and very large one, too. He it was who first successfully performed the operation known as re-section. That is, where the entire bone of an arm was destroyed and taken away by the surgeon, the wound was kept open until a cartilage formed and filled the space between the lost and saved portions of bone, so that an arm was saved instead of amputating it. There is a man living to-day, a clerk in the surgeon general's office, whose left arm, between the elbow and shoulder, contains cartilage instead of bone; an arm which would have been cut off by an ordinary surgeon on the battlefield, but which was saved in Armory Square hospital.

The war was over, and in 1866 Dr. Bliss returned to the practice of his profession in this city. Fifteen years later, there was a man shot by an assassin on the northeast corner of Armory square. On the border of the old canal to-day stands the passenger depot of the Pennsylvania railroad. Two gentlemen were entering that depot on the morning of July 2, 1881. One of them was James G. Blaine, secretary of state, and the other man was James A. Garfield, president of the

DR. D. W. BLISS.

United States. It was upon a corner of the old Armory square where Dr. Bliss had ministered to thousands of soldiers. President Garfield had been a union soldier. Behind the door of the depot stood a half-crazed, unsuccessful office-seeker, named Guiteau. He held in his hand a revolver and with it shot twice at the president. One shot took effect and the great and good man fell upon the floor. Secretary Blaine called for assistance; a lady in charge of the ladies' room of the depot rushed to his side and raised the head of the stricken man into her lap, while she stroked his forehead with her trembling hands. The assassin was captured. The apparently dying president was taken to the white house, and Dr. Bliss, the former surgeon in charge of old Armory Square general hospital, was summoned as attending surgeon.

Hon. James Harlan, of Iowa, had been secretary of the interior. His daughter Mary had married Robert T. Lincoln, the son of President Lincoln. Dr. Bliss had for many years been the family physician of the Harlan family. Robert T. Lincoln, son of the lamented martyred president, was secretary of war in the Garfield administration. He, of course, knew Dr. Bliss. It was by his order that Dr. Bliss was summoned to take charge of the case, and, although never published before, that is the exact truth of the story of how Dr. Bliss came to be called in as surgeon in charge of the fatally wounded President Garfield. I knew Dr. Bliss intimately, and from his lips I learned the story of his connection with that case. I also know Robert T. Lincoln, who is now our minister to Great Britain, and he confirmed the statement of Dr. Bliss.

But the fact that the president was wounded upon the site of the old Armory Square hospital and that he was attended by the celebrated surgeon in charge of that hospital was never revealed or published until to-day. James F. Linden, an old and experienced clerk in the pension division of the war department, who knows all of the history of the hospitals of the war, in conversation the other evening gave me the materials for the greater part of this letter. We were talking of the historic buildings of the national capital, when I mentioned the fact that I had written for this paper an account of the fish commission. He immediately said: "Did you know that building in which the fish commission is located was the greatest hospital in Washington during the war?" He then proceeded to tell about it. He said: "All of the worst and most dangerously wounded cases were taken to Armory square; first, because it was nearest the river, so that the sufferers had less distance to travel over the rough roads from the steamboat landing, and, second, because Dr. Bliss was the best surgeon in the city. The records of the war department show some of the most remarkable cases in traumatic history, some of the miracles of surgical skill, under the treatment of Dr. Bliss. This is one of the unwritten chapters of war history, with which everybody should be conversant. All of your old soldier readers would be interested in it, and thousands of the sons and daughters of veterans and their hosts of friends would be glad to know these things." Mr. Linden is right, and upon his suggestion I have written you this letter.

SMITH D. FRY.

Russian Successes in Persia.

Great Britain and Russia are engaged in playing a remarkable game in Persia. After the British had obtained the concession of the tobacco monopoly, it was the influence of Russia that rendered the monopoly useless. Britain insisting upon her merchants being indemnified, the Persian government agreed to pay them $2,500,000. But Persia has no money, and the British are dunning her to pay. So Russia has come forward, offering to advance to Persia the money, which is to be secured by the Persian customs. Thus Russia will obtain control of the Persian customs and manage them in a manner to injure British import trade more and more until it can be entirely annihilated. Evidently Great Britain loses in influence as Russia is increasing her hold on Persia.